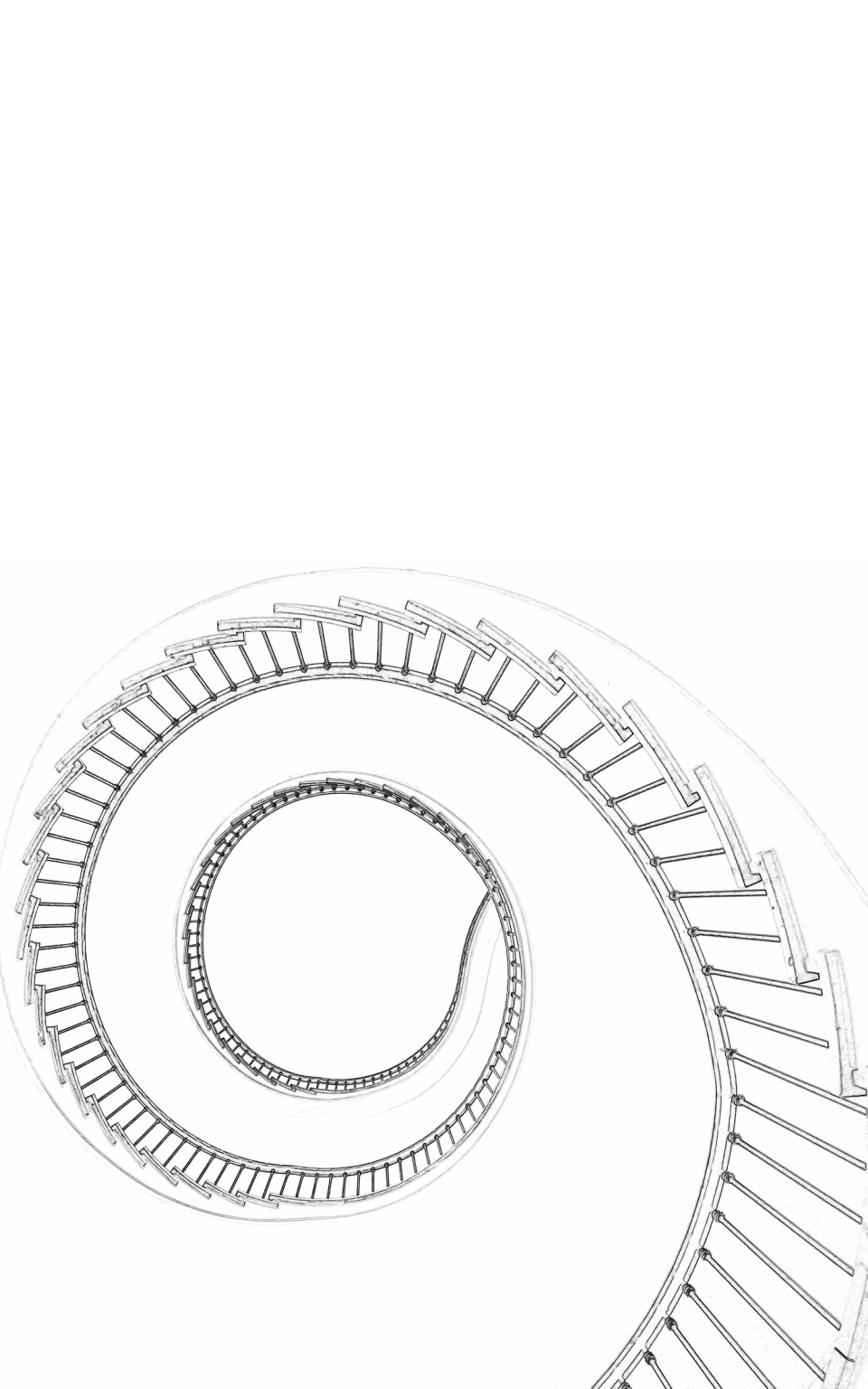


*Caravan...
a trail of haiku*

Melissa Dennison





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INTRODUCTION

I am a haiku poet who writes from observation and lived experience. As I live in Yorkshire it tends to be wet, and I regularly encounter snails in the garden, climbing over pots, up the garage wall, even up the patio doors, and often I discover them eating my precious blooms. Admittedly I am a struggling gardener and my relationship with snails can be fraught. Luckily though for the snails, I find them curious and quite fascinating with their eyes at the end of stalks, their mouth which is also a foot, their twisted bodies and spiral shells. Snails are such an unusual design for life, we don't need to look out into space to find alien life forms.

Being a complex human with a mass of contradictions I also have an interest in conserving snails, even dabbling briefly in conchology and malacology or the scientific study of snails. There are approximately 60,000 species of snail in marine, freshwater, and terrestrial environments. Some are tiny, less than a millimetre in size whilst others are huge (for a snail) at 75 centimetres. Did you know that some snails can even walk on water? Snails play a key role in ecosystems, doing their bit for recycling waste and are also a valuable food source. Some species are endangered, for example, *polymita sulphurosa*, the painted snail of Cuba. Its shells come in a variety of colours and are prized as jewellery.

As a haiku poet one of my influences is Kobayashi Issa (1763 – 1828), whose poems were both imaginative and observant of the little creatures that shared his world. For instance:

oh snail,
climb Mt. Fuji,
but slowly, slowly

- Issa

This is an interesting haiku, as I wonder why Issa writes about a snail, why the snail is climbing Mount Fuji and what this means. In Japan, snails represent tenacity, resilience, and self-sufficiency, whilst Mount Fuji symbolises strength and endurance. In addition, climbing Mount Fuji refers to a journey of enlightenment, that connects nature with the divine. Perhaps this haiku contains a metaphor for life. However, Issa might also be suggesting that the snail should follow her own nature and be herself as she travels on her journey. I can't claim that my haiku are as complex or multilayered, but I hope that you enjoy reading!

heatwave ~
a snail and I
seeking shade

WEE SPARROW HAIKU NOOK
HAIKU OF THE MONTH

caravans parked
a pair of snails
become acquainted

black tarmac
the precariousness
of the snail

FIVE FLEAS ITCHY POETRY

in the garden...

a

shower

of

snails

in the gravel
gastropoda...
making a splash

spirling
around your shell
a universe of stars

DAILY HAIGA

sunrise
the abstract art
of snails

WALES HAIKU JOURNAL

without the snails:
I would have
beautiful blooms

cartography
lines in the front
left by the snails

BLITHE SPIRIT

remorse
feeling the crunch
of a snail

FIVE FLEAS ITCHY POETRY

on my patio door
a snail loses itself
in the clouds

after
the snails...
aphids

echoes of the sea
in the
empty shell

August morning...
a memory
of snails

opinions may vary...
t h i s i s f a s t
for a snail

no ghost
in the shell...
just a snail



making space for nature...
a snail decapitates
my sunflower

who knows
what a snail gets up to
inside the shell

climbing Mount Fuji...
moonshine
in the snail's eye

a carpet of
snails
after the showers

nothing troubles
the snail...
he's just short sighted

AFTER BUSON'S
'A SNAIL, / ONE HORN SHORT, ONE LONG - / WHAT TROUBLES HIM?'
TR. R.H. BLYTHE

party crasher
at the foot of the stairs
a snail

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l'escargot climbs
l'eiffel slowly, slowly...
unaware there's a lift



ceasefire...
the shattered remains
of a snail

signing on
the dotted line...
a pair of snails mating

fallen leaves...
snails grab a bite
of late summer heat

when the showers stop...
being careful
where I put my feet

even in drought –
the glimmer
of snails!

Mark Making

The world continues to spin –
a confusion of sound, light,
and shadows. A solitary snail
glides on; its journey
measured in millimetres not
miles. This could be a
metaphor for patience and
determination. However,
remember, it's nothing special,
just an ordinary snail. There
may be obstacles in its path to
be overcome, yet the snail
is unhurried, it travels lightly,
its short time on Earth marked
only by a line of silver.

the shimmer
on the surface of a stone...
just passing through

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Melissa Dennison is a writer of Japanese short form poetry, short stories and flash fiction. She has had haiku published in several journals including *Presence*, *Failed Haiku*, *Poetry Pea*, *Wales Haiku*, *Under the Basho*, *Cold Moon*, and in anthologies including *Heterodox Haiku*, *Poetry Pea's Little Marvel* and the *British Haiku Society Member's Anthology*. She is currently an Assistant Editor for *Re:Virals* at The Haiku Foundation and has been nominated for a Touchstone Award. Melissa also has an origami chapbook published called 'A Prayer of Birds'.

Melissa Dennison is a writer of Japanese short form poetry. She writes a great deal about the little creatures that share her space, particularly snails. As an amateur gardener she admits that she has a love-hate relationship with her gastropod friends. The poems contained in these pages are the product of this contested space. They are also full of humour, wry observations and will make you laugh (or smile).



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